

Brookline (Nov. 4, 1883) and Lynn, Mass. (July 6, 1878), and at Rye Beach, N. H. (Aug. 7, 1880). In the present instance the habits of the species, as well as the absence of violent storms for some time previous, preclude all idea of the bird's having been swept away from his home and dropped here by some cyclonic gale. In all probability it was simply a case of that restless spirit of wandering that takes possession of most 'non-migratory' species in the autumn, and which is very likely the surviving remnant of a former habit of migration in such species.—C. F. BATCHELDER, *Cambridge, Mass.*

Notes from Springfield, Massachusetts.—November 14, 1891, I captured on the Connecticut River near Springfield an adult male *Aythya collaris*. Occasionally in autumn a small flock of this species will locate their feeding grounds in this vicinity and remain a month or so, but as far as my experience goes they have heretofore been young birds.

During the first half of November, the most common Duck about here was *Dafila acuta*; this was something quite unusual. One day I was one of a party that captured nine specimens, and we could easily have taken more if we had cared to do so. There were a few *Anas obscura* in company with the *Dafila acuta*, instead of the reverse as is usually the case if any of the latter kind are in this locality.

From the 28th day of last August until about the 20th day of September a water bird, which I suppose to have been a Clapper Rail, located itself and remained among the wild oats that grow on the muddy banks of the Connecticut River upon the shore directly opposite the city of Springfield. During calm days the call of the bird, which very much resembles that of the common Guineahen, could be distinctly heard from this side of the river, a distance of more than a quarter of a mile. All my attempts at capture failed, although I approached within a few feet of the bird. I know of but one Clapper Rail having been taken in this vicinity.

While shooting from a blind this fall, a Wood Duck stopped and fluttered over the decoys, and while in that position, like a flash, a Sharpshinned Hawk flew and fastened itself upon the back of the Duck, when both were shot. I relate this incident to show the ferocity and boldness of this little Hawk.

A pair of Mockingbirds, whose presence in West Springfield I have heretofore recorded, passed this their fourth successive season in the same locality in that town.—ROBERT O. MORRIS, *Springfield, Mass.*

NOTES AND NEWS.

AUGUST VON PELZELN, an Honorary Member of the American Ornithologists' Union, died at Oberdöbling, near Vienna, on the 2d of September, 1891, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. Owing to failing health

he had recently resigned the position of Custos of the Imperial Museum at Vienna, where for forty years he was in charge of the collections of mammals and birds. He had for a long period been recognized as one of the leading ornithologists of the world, and an especial authority on the birds of Brazil. Although the author of a long list of minor papers and essays, his best known work is doubtless the invaluable 'Zur Ornithologie Brasiliens,' published in parts, 1868-71, based on the collections made by Johann Natterer during the years 1817 to 1835, representing 1200 species and numbering over 12,000 specimens. He also published extensively upon mammals, particularly those of Brazil, collected by Natterer.

CAPTAIN THOMAS WRIGHT BLAKISTON, R. A., one of the original Corresponding Members of our Union, died in San Diego, Cala., on October 15, 1891, from pneumonia.

To ornithologists Capt. Blakiston was best known for his invaluable contributions to the knowledge of the avifauna of Japan, and it is safe to say that no one man has done so much towards the thorough understanding of the ornithology of that interesting country. During a sojourn of twenty years in the northernmost island of Japan proper, Yezo, he was enabled to give a nearly exhaustive list of the regular visitors and residents of that hitherto almost entirely unknown island, introducing an entirely new feature in the Japanese avifauna, viz., the Siberian, and demonstrating the fact that the dividing line between the Manchurian and the Siberian subregions of the Palæarctic region is formed by the Strait of Tsugaru which separates Yezo from the main island. This zoögeographical line has justly been termed 'Blakiston's line' in recognition of his valuable work.

After having collected material for a full understanding of the zoögeographical position of Yezo, he in conjunction with Mr. Pryer in 1879 issued the first catalogue of the Birds of Japan that lays claim to an approach to completeness, as the list of the 'Fauna Japonica' only comprises the birds of the extreme southern part of Japan proper. In 1880 a new list was published, a revised edition of which was again printed in 1882. The latter is practically the foundation of all future work in Japanese ornithology. It is *the* 'Check List' of Japan.

It was not only the geographical distribution pure and simple that attracted his attention. With true scientific tact and accuracy he investigated the changes of plumages, the migrations, and the habits of the birds he came in contact with, and many an intricate question has been solved which without his untiring energy and loving understanding would have remained unsolved to this day.

Blakiston was not a 'professional' ornithologist; he was an amateur in the best sense of the word, for he was scientific in his methods and aims as only few of even the professionals. But he was an amateur in this that his motive was a most unselfish love of truth and his science. He did not pursue his studies for the 'glory' they might bring him, but in order to satisfy his thirst for knowledge. Nor did he, while working out the details, lose sight of their connection with the whole. Unlike most

amateurs he appreciated that the knowledge of distribution, migration, habits, etc., is not the ultimate aim of his science, but that these details are only valuable in so far as they assist in ascertaining the laws and history of the whole living world, of life itself.

In strict conformity with the scientific spirit that characterized all his doings were the modesty and generosity of the man. Always willing to help and to give, never jealous of anybody 'stealing his thunder,' but on the contrary, openhearted and openhanded, giving out of his stores both of knowledge and material without expecting or claiming 'returns' or 'credit.' And because men of Captain Blakiston's stamp are so scarce his loss is felt more deeply by those who had the good fortune to know him and to profit by his nobleness of heart and mind.

We have not space to enumerate all the various papers published by him on the birds of Japan. The principal ones have been alluded to above, and to these we would add the title of a very interesting paper read by him on February 14, 1883, before the Asiatic Society of Japan, viz: 'Zoölogical Indications of Ancient Connection of the Japan Islands with the Continent.'

The following species were named in his honor:—*Alda blakistoni*; *Anthus blakistoni*; *Areoturnis blakistoni*; *Arundinax blakistoni*; *Bubo blakistoni*; *Chelidon blakistoni*; *Motacilla blakistoni*.

Captain Blakiston was born at Lympington, Hants, England, December 27, 1832. He received his education at the Royal Military Academy, joined the Royal Artillery, and served during the Crimean War. At the end of the latter he was sent to Canada where he was detailed to join the Palliser Expedition for exploring the country between Canada and the Rocky Mountains. The winter of 1857-58 was spent in Hudson's Bay Territory and in Western Canada, and during the following summer he crossed the Rocky Mountains twice. The ornithological results of his wanderings in the Fur Countries are embodied in two valuable papers, published in 'The Ibis' for 1861, 1862, and 1863, entitled 'On the Birds of the Interior of British North America,' which are still the main source of our ornithological knowledge of these parts of our continent. In 1861 he surveyed the middle and upper Yangtse-Kiang, for which work he received the Royal Medal of the Royal Geographical Society. Shortly after he left China for Japan, where, after a brief visit to England, he settled in Hakodate, engaging in mercantile pursuits. In his spare time he engaged in his favorite studies, exploring and surveying a then almost unknown country and people. In 1884 he retired from business and came to this country where he settled and married Miss Dun of London, Ohio.

Captain Blakiston collected extensively. His Canadian collections went to Woolwich, England; quite a number of Japanese birds he sent to R. Swinhoe, while a great many more were given to the local museum in Hakodate, but the remainder of his valuable collection he donated to the United States National Museum, where it forms the nucleus and most valued portion of one of the most extensive collections of Japanese birds in existence.—L. STEJNEGER.